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DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

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COORDINATION QUESTIONS: PROPOSED SYSTEM-WIDE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, 1996-2001

1. At its .. meeting on 11 June, the Committee considered the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/1996/16). The Committee also had before it, for its information, resolution 40/10, adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session (11-22 March 1996), on the same subject (E/AC.51/1996/5, annex).

Discussion

2. Some delegations suggested that the words "under parental supervision" be inserted after the words "girls and boys" in line 6 of paragraph 92 of document E/1996/16.

3. In the section on women and health, in the same document, some delegations strongly objected to the reference to the term "individuals" in paragraphs 71 and 93, and insisted on the deletion of this word from the text since it was not agreed to in other forums.

4. One delegation questioned the relevance of the inclusion of the words "there should be complementarity between policy reform and direct intervention" in paragraph 23 of the document and requested their deletion since they seemed to be out of context.

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Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee welcomed the preparation of the second system-wide medium-term plan on the advancement of women and, aware of the indicative nature of the plan, appreciated the efforts of those United Nations entities that had contributed to its elaboration. It noted with appreciation that the plan, while following the structure of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, also included elements from other recent United Nations conferences and summits, and from other relevant intergovernmental mandates. The increased focus on system-wide collaboration and cooperation in the follow-up to conferences was commended.

6. The Committee supported and reiterated the extensive and thorough comments that had been adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women on the draft of the plan (resolution 40/10, annex). Those comments by the substantive body dealing with women and gender issues were considered to be a valuable input to the work of the Committee.

7. The Committee expressed its support for the system-wide mainstreaming of a gender perspective. Noting the valuable work done in that regard by the Commission on the Status of Women, it was stressed, however, that responsibility for mainstreaming was incumbent upon all United Nations machinery. It also expressed support for capacity-building for mainstreaming at the national level, particularly in developing countries. It recognized the catalytic role of the Division for the Advancement of Women in gender mainstreaming, and underscored the need to strengthen the capacity of the Division in implementing the Platform for Action and the system-wide plan.

8. The Committee agreed to ensure, in its examination of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective was reflected in the individual programmes of the medium-term plan. It emphasized the responsibility of programme managers for progress in gender mainstreaming. The Committee took note of the proposal that international legal instruments concerning the protection of women receive priority ratification by Member States.

9. In the light of its joint responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the system-wide plan, and the anticipated mid-term review to be conducted by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council in 1998, the Committee agreed to conduct a progress review at some stage during the next four years, preferably in 1998, or in 2000. It also noted that the Commission on the Status of Women was expected to monitor annually progress in the implementation of the plan within the framework of its long-term programme of work.

10. The Committee stressed the need for a coordinated and collaborative approach by the United Nations system in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, and for an integrated approach in the follow-up to all recent United Nations conferences and summits. At the same time, the Committee underlined the individual responsibility and accountability of agencies for implementing those parts of the Platform and the system-wide plan falling within their specific

mandate. It also stressed the necessity of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the planning and programming of all United Nations agencies. It commended the plan's emphasis on avoiding overlapping and duplication of efforts. It emphasized the need to refine and improve research and data collection.

11. The Committee took note of the recent establishment of a standing ACC committee on women and gender issues, and of its role in the implementation of the system-wide plan and reporting thereon. The importance of being able to monitor progress against agreed indicators was noted as being important for the proper implementation of the plan. The Committee also recognized that some of the issues raised on its implementation would be taken up in that context. It expressed support for the efforts undertaken by the Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on gender issues.

12. Reiterating the comments made in the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee stressed that the plan should be more strategic and include outputs that could be measured and properly evaluated at the end of the period covered by the plan, rather than a list of activities to be undertaken. It emphasized that all departments of the United Nations Secretariat had a role in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action.

13. The Committee agreed that greater emphasis needed to be placed on outputs and results to be achieved from the implementation of the activities contained in the plan. In that regard, it observed the absence of benchmarks for assessing progress in implementation and it agreed that future revisions to the plan must redress that omission.

14. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the desirability of designating lead agencies in activities where there was a multitude of participating entities in order to avoid duplication of efforts. It underlined the critical importance of interaction between research and operational activities, and consequently between research-oriented United Nations bodies and operational entities.

15. The Committee underlined the important role of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the Platform for Action. Consequently, and to the extent possible, the plan should pay more attention to their role. It should also reflect additional measures for sharing responsibilities between men and women as a component of implementation.

16. The Committee agreed that, in outlining technical and other assistance to developing countries, the plan should be more focused to ensure that useful and practical assistance was provided. It highlighted the need to use agreed language from conferences.

17. The Committee recommended that various intergovernmental bodies study the system-wide plan, noting that comments in addition to those of the Commission on the Status of Women would constitute valuable input into the implementation of the plan.

18. Referring to particular sections of the system-wide plan, as well as to comments adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee made the following observations.

Women and poverty

19. The Committee reiterated the need to focus attention on the underlying causes of women's poverty, and that resources allocated to development policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty should not be diverted to emergency relief assistance. It emphasized the need for participation of all relevant entities, including regional commissions, in addressing poverty. Insufficient attention was being paid to the situation of rural women in the section on women and poverty and throughout the plan.

20. The relevance of commitments 2 and 10 of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, as well as paragraph 25 of chapter II of the Programme of Action of the Summit, to poverty eradication efforts within the framework of the plan was emphasized.

Women and health

21. The Committee emphasized the need to update the language in the section on women and health to reflect accurately the language from the International Conference on Population and Development and the Platform for Action. It stressed the need to reaffirm the principle of women's equal access to health services. It expressed concern at the lack of attention given to gender and HIV/AIDS and to female genital mutilation. It noted the role of adult education in eliminating female genital mutilation.

Violence against women

22. The Committee expressed support for operational activities in the prevention and elimination of violence against women, and for further collaboration and exchange of information among United Nations entities active in this area. The impetus provided by the Beijing Conference to address violence against women should be more fully used by all actors. The recently established Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women in the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995, should be utilized to support operational activities that are consistent with the proposed actions in the system-wide plan. Additional efforts to address violence against women migrant workers could be envisaged.

Women and the economy

23. The Committee welcomed initiatives to study gender aspects with regard to export processing zones and special economic zones.

Women in power and decision-making

24. Noting the continuing underrepresentation of women in managerial and decision-making posts in the United Nations system, the Committee underlined the

need to expand opportunities for women to fill vacancies. Notwithstanding annual resolutions of the General Assembly on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, agreed goals remained to be achieved. It was also pointed out that the equal treatment of women in appointment and promotion must be in accordance with Article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Human rights of women

25. The Committee welcomed efforts to support the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and of relevant International Labour Organization conventions. It also encouraged efforts to strengthen the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Women and the media

26. Activities relating to paragraph 243 (f) of the Platform for Action should be envisaged in the plan.

Institutional arrangements

27. The Committee expressed support for the need to develop further methods for accountability and evaluation of progress in implementing the Platform for Action and eliminating gender discrimination, particularly at the field level, but also at the policy level.

28. The Committee welcomed the particular role accorded to regional commissions in implementation, and pointed out the comparative advantage of regional and subregional offices in providing support to Governments. Furthermore, it underlined the desirability of increased regional cooperation among United Nations agencies. The lack of information in the system-wide plan on activities of the Economic Commission for Africa was a cause for concern.

Financial arrangements

29. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the preparation of a table showing actual and pledged resources in support of implementation of the activities in the plan. Recognizing the indicative nature of the plan, efforts should be made by the implementing agencies to provide more specific information, including an assessment of the level of allocated resources, during the course of the review of the plan.

30. Regarding resource mobilization for the purpose of implementing the Platform within the framework of the consensus reached at the Conference, the Committee noted that due account needed to be given to existing regulations and rules concerning the redeployment of resources. It underlined the primary responsibility of Governments for implementing the Platform for Action.